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MEMOIR OF RALPH STOCKMAN TARR

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Ralph Stockman Tarr was born January 15, 1864, in Gloucester, Massachusetts. He died, after a brief illness, at his home in Ithaca, March 21, 1912, being a little more than forty-eight years of age. In Gloucester his boyhood and youth were passed. What the influence of early environment must have contributed to the main currents of his life was told by one of his fellow teachers, at the funeral service in Sage Chapel, on the campus where he had wrought for twenty years. "For a student of geography few places could have given better preparation than the busy Gloucester of his youth. It was not yet the day of the steam trawler, creeping sullenly in to swell the profits of a trust; instead, fleets of deep-laden bankers, the nested dories shining from their decks, crowded on all sail in the homeward race. High sparred barques discharged salt from Portugal, and handy schooners sailed out past Norman's Woe with cod for Barbadoes and Funchal. The mystery of earth's space, the romance of far flung trade, brooded over the little port."

After he had passed away there was found a writing, not before known to exist. It was written in a small black-bound note book of the United States Geological Survey, in a clear but swift-running hand. It was a short sketch of his early life, made apparently at a single sitting, on the Nugsuak Peninsula, Greenland, September 6, 1906. In this short but absorbing story of experience, he tells the ventures and struggles through which he passed from 1881, a youth of seventeen, until he was far into the midstream of his career, fifteen years later. To follow the lines of this self-revelation, made without reserve but with absolute simplicity, has been to the writer of this memorial, a sacred privilege.

On graduation from the high school in 1881, Tarr's interest in science led him to enter the summer school of the Peabody Academy at Salem. He was unable to continue there, but a talk with one of his teachers planted the impulse to go to college. He determined upon the Lawrence Scientific School and entered at Cambridge in the autumn. He made daily trips over the thirty miles between Gloucester and Cambridge, rising at 5:30 for the 6:15 train, reaching home at eight o'clock in the evening, whose later hours were filled with study. It is no wonder that by June, as he says, he was tired out and somewhat discouraged.

In the summer came an opportunity to assist Professor Alpheus Hyatt in dredging and to study invertebrates in his private laboratory. The following autumn he spent a short time at Wood's Holl, dredging with Professor Baird and then went to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, where he was given work through the winter and spring. In the summer of 1883 he was at Wood's Holl again, dredging, and beginning to write articles for the *New York Sun, Nature,* and other papers, on deep sea life. This new work offered a further means of self-support and gave him a training in expression which was to be used throughout his life. *Science, Forest and Stream,* the *Presbyterian Observer,* the *Congregationalist, Boston Transcript, Leslie's Monthly* and many other papers received his contributions during this period. His first original paper, on the crawfish, appeared at this time in *Nature.*

At the end of the year he resigned his place at the Smithsonian and returned to Gloucester. In Washington he had found friendships in cultivated homes, which helped to carry him through the years of change and youthful struggle while he was finding himself and driving on, without seeing his way, toward his life work. In the summer of 1884 he made a trip up the Saguenay and into the woods. This was an early expression of his great love for travel and for widening his field of observation. In the fall of 1884 he went back to college, this time living at Cambridge. New opportunity to earn his way and a great impulse in a new realm of study thus came with the acquaintance of Professor Shaler.

Interrupting college with a long and disappointing experience on a western ranch, he returned to Shaler and geology in 1887. His western sojourn had increased his interest in the science and his counsellor and friend helped him to realize a purpose, which, after many vicissitudes, was now shaping itself to grim determination. He now accomplished much work on the geology of Cape Ann, a problem which he says was much too big for his experience. It may in truth be said, however, that the report on that region published in the Ninth Annual Report of the United States Geological Survey is substantially Tarr's work.

The next year he was one of a group of geological students, numbering Whittle, Woodworth, Penrose, Cobb, Ladd, Foerste, Dodge, Collie, and others, an association marked by true fellowship and progress in science. He followed with summer work under Shaler and developed his interest in physical geography and glacial geology. In the fall of 1888 college work was again interrupted by an appointment to the Arid Land Survey. He went to New Mexico, learned stream gauging and the use of meteorological instruments and was promoted from the position of "skilled laborer" to that of hydro-

grapher. Service in Montana followed, and later he spent a large part of 1890 as a member of the Geological Survey of Texas.

Returning to Cambridge he became an assistant to Shaler, continuing his studies under Professors Shaler, Davis and Wolff and receiving his college degree in 1891. He was appointed to the professorship of geology in the University of South Dakota, but having a position already under Wolff in the Archaean Division of the national survey, he declined the call to the west. In the spring of 1892 he was married to Miss Kate Story of Gloucester, and received a temporary appointment at Cornell. There is ample reason to believe that Professor Dana desired Tarr to succeed him in the Yale chair, but he was not successful in bringing about this end. In 1894 Tarr was appointed to the Cornell chair for three years. In 1895 he published his Elementary Physical Geography and accomplished his work in the Chautauqua grape belt. In 1896, worn with many tasks, he spent a short period of rest in the Bermudas, and returned to organize the Cornell expedition to Greenland. This was successfully carried out and added to his experience and productive observation.

Thence to the end, his life was closely linked to Cornell University. His labors as teacher, author, investigator and traveler follow one another with bewildering rapidity. Not best in the way of chronology, can these activities be set forth. The order of events does not count much in a great life, for such a life expresses character and truth, realities far beyond the hampering bounds of time.

Professor Tarr never lost sight of his opportunities as an investigator. He had a restless passion for new truth, which ran side by side with his desire to acquire and interpret the old. In his search he showed contempt for weariness, devoted himself to rapid and almost ceaseless work and took little account of personal danger.

He at once made himself at home in the region about Ithaca. The field was rich in physiographic and glacial problems, and he took up the origin of the Finger Lake basins, the history of the drainage, the evidences of the glacial Finger Lakes, the distribution of the local terminal moraines, and the characteristics of the post-glacial gorges. In more recent years he executed a detailed survey of the Ithaca and seven neighboring quadrangles, and his results appear in the Watkins Glen-Catatonk folio of the United States Geological Survey. This is one of the very few regions in New York whose glacial phenomena have received full areal study and mapping.

Professor Tarr became interested in Alaskan work and spent there the summers of 1905 and 1906 under the National Survey. In 1909 and 1911 he conducted parties in Alaska under the auspices of the National Geographic Society. In 1909 he published, as Professional Paper 64, the Physiography and Glacial Geology of the Yakutat

Bay Region, Alaska. With Martin as co-author he published "Earthquakes at Yakutat Bay, Alaska, in September, 1899." This appeared as Professional Paper 69 of the Survey. The National Geographic Society now has in course of publication a volume on Alaskan Glacier Studies, which deals with the research work in 1909 and 1911 and also embodies the work of Martin in 1910. He also left the nearly completed manuscript of a College Physiography, a production of his maturity, which is now being edited and prepared for publication. Members of the Association recall the vigor, the comprehensive interpretation and the compelling interest of his paper on "Glaciers and Glaciation in Alaska," which he offered as his presidential address at the Washington meeting.

The Greenland work was the basis of several papers, and the years 1901, 1902, 1909 and 1910 were marked by long sojourns in Europe, with many field trips and much active study. During his last year abroad he gratified his love of work in the far north by going to Spitzbergen with members of the Geological Congress. He visited Panama in 1907. Not long before the time of his death he was making plans for a summer in Newfoundland, where he had long desired to study the features of glaciation.

He was positive in opinion but considerate of the views of others. His paper on the theory of the peneplain showed these qualities. Professor Davis in his rejoinder, while controverting Tarr's opinions, recognized the paper as an example of fair and temperate discussion. As time went on he developed a larger and riper interest in human geography, as is shown by many of his papers, especially by some which were offered for the programs of this Association.

His life shows what a great teacher does as a fountain of instruction, inspiration, co-operation and friendship. He loved to acknowledge his debt to Shaler and he exhibited in his own teaching many of the traits of his early master in the earth sciences. He had broad interest in man and nature and he brought the youth and nature together, confident of the result, heeding little the nice precisions of any particular method of approaching a problem. He was able to see beyond the young investigator's crudities and errors, to preserve the young man's respect for his intellectual self and allow him to evolve his own ways of working without hindrance.

A multitude felt his influence at Cornell University. There are to-day many teachers of Geology and Geography whose scientific father he was, and I have never seen one who did not pay credit to the vitality of his teaching and the purity and nobility of his manhood.* There was an atmosphere of geographic interest in which his

* Among Tarr's former students may be named the following: J. A. Bonsteel, U. S. Bureau of Soils; B. S. Butler, U. S. Geological Survey; S. P. Carll, economic

students lived and worked. They found it in him, in his laboratories, in the field and within the ever open doors of a lovely and hospitable home. The thorns that beset his early paths made him sympathize with the hardships and baffled progress of others.

Among his students were many teachers who came to the University for the summer courses. Several years of association with him in this work first brought the writer of this sketch into an appreciation of his sympathetic power as a teacher.

He took much interest in gathering and acquiring the materials of instruction. He fitted others to do the details of this work, and was always surrounded by a group of efficient student assistants. He never allowed himself to be submerged by the numberless material arrangements which tempt and engross some teachers of science. He recognized more than most teachers the necessity of field work, and both his summer courses and the regular courses were securely buttressed by this kind of study.

Professor Tarr produced in rapid succession a series of most important and successful text books. His first ventures were in the field of economic and of high school geology. Next came the first of his physical geographies, which was a major contribution to the pedagogy of geography, and which, in the field of high school work, was the pioneer in making the new geography available. The book had an awakening freshness of treatment and wrought large results in its field. It was followed by later texts on the same subject, and by the writing, in coöperation with Professor McMurry, of one of the leading series of elementary geographies in America. He was fertile in devising helps to accompany his various texts, and there was cut off by his death an attempt at the problems of experimental geography, which promised good not only to teachers but to the growth of the science itself.

A series of articles on the geography of New York state was published in the Bulletin of the American Geographical Society and later embodied in a volume. His pen was fertile in articles for geographical journals, and of the one already mentioned as well as of the Journal of Geography he was an associate editor. He also

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geologist; Frank Carney, Denison University; William Lockhead, Ontario Agricultural College; G. D. Hubbard, Oberlin College; M. T. Iorns, University of Texas; F. V. Emerson, University of Louisiana; J. O. Martin, U. S. Bureau of Soils; G. C. Matson, U. S. Geological Survey; Lawrence Martin, University of Wisconsin; F. S. Mills, geologist; W. E. McCourt, Washington University; Mr. Marvin, of Peary's North Pole party; F. N. Meeker, U. S. Bureau of Soils; C. L. Mills, U. S. Weather Bureau; E. M. Kindle, Canadian Geological Survey; J. L. Rich, University of Illinois; R. P. Tarr, Northern Pacific Railway; O. D. von Engeln, Cornell University; T. L. Watson, University of Virginia; R. H. Whitbeck, University of Wisconsin.

contributed to Johnson's Encyclopedia, the International Encyclopedia and to the last edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Professor Tarr was a fellow of the Geological Society of America, a constituent member of the Association of American Geographers, a member of the Sigma Xi, of the Seismological Society of America, and a foreign correspondent of the Geological Society of London. He served on the International Glacial Committee and shortly before his death was elected a corresponding member of the Royal Geographical Society of Vienna. The news of this recognition was not received until he had passed away.

To the Association of American Geographers he gave loyal and unfailing service. He was a Councillor for two terms and served as first vice-president in 1907. In this year, following the death of Professor Heilprin, he was acting president and presided at the Chicago meeting. At the same time, owing to the absence of the Secretary, he performed the duties of that office also for several weeks during the preparation of the program. He presented papers with great regularity and attended every meeting except that of 1909, when he was absent in Europe. It is fresh in our memory that he was President of the Association in 1911.

His career was strengthened by a happy home life. It was tempered by sorrows in the loss of two of his four children, but dominated by good cheer. Success did not elate him, for he modestly made each stage of life the platform for new achievements.

His body rests in a little cemetery upon the terrace of an elevated delta of one of the former glacial lakes which preceded Lake Cayuga. His grave is fittingly marked by a glacial boulder, a striated erratic of granite, transported long ago from Labrador or the Adirondacks by the continental glacier and thus made ready to mark forever the resting place of one who worked long and well to interpret the records of glacial action.

After all, it is his personality which we miss most and honor most. Possessed by powerful early impulse, with purpose vaguely defined, he entered every avenue that opened in the great field and at last found the broad highway for his steps. Mental turmoil and financial struggle he compelled to an issue in clear purpose and in material and intellectual triumph. His basal quality was sincerity. He was fairness personified. He was incapable of envy or of any mean motive or act. He had profound contempt for indirectness and lived in broad charity. He would not make a harsh utterance in the face of personal injury, yet he was capable of blazing indignation and of withering contempt for all that was beneath the standards of a man. To all who loved him, and they are many, the loss is irreparable, but memory is fragrant and the heritage of his life is permanent.